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ABSTRACT

Changes in Israel's education system are designed to increase the Israeli's ability to fit into the contemporary civilization. Israeli education also seeks to transmit Jewish heritage and foster a sense of communal solidarity. This paper presents a historical overview of Israeli education and the adaptations it has made in response to sociocultural changes in society. It describes pre-state Zionist education, adaptations made in the first generation of statehood, changes during the 1970s brought about by the empowerment of former Israeli minorities, alterations made during the 1990s, and future trends. The profile of education in the 1990s is characterized by a shift from ideological to instrumental goals, increased reliance on parents for funding education, promotion of individual goals versus group solidarity, reduced education budgets, and an increase in sports subsidies (informal education) at the expense of formal education. Future issues include privatization, local autonomy, the relationship of minority groups to education, the integration of different ethnic groups, and group solidarity versus individualism. The report concludes with overviews of tertiary education and vocational education in Israel. (LMI)

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EDUCATION IN A SOCIETY AT A CROSSROADS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY OF ISRAEL'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Daniel J. Elazar

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Introduction

Since the early 1980's, there have been many changes in Israeli's education system, paralleling changes in Israeli society. The traditional Zionist and Jewish dimensions of education, once considered the essence of what was necessary to educate the new generation, began to be replaced by more conventional ideas of what is useful to teach the young. It is clear that there is a growing interest among parents and students in American-style instrumental education.

Even ideological and humanistic education can be properly understood only when it is seen to be instrumental in a different way. Israel's education system was founded on certain civilizational and ideological principles having to do with the survival and reinvigoration of the Jewish people according to the perspectives of Zionist ideology overall and the specific interpretations of that ideology represented by different camps within the Zionist movement and the emerging Jewish state: socialist, civic (international), and religious. Fostering these ideological and civilizational elements was considered to be the most important instrumental task of Israel's education systems from the beginning of the Zionist enterprise until the late 1970's. Thus Israeli education was designed with that task in mind.

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Most of these changes have to do with increasing the Israelis' ability to fit into contemporary civilization, especially in its Western (and most especially American) version. The Institute for the Study of Educational Systems, a joint effort of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and the Foundations of the Milken Families, is the first to study that shift and its impact.

The goals of Israel's education system in all of its parts are, perforce, different than those of the public educational system in the United States, because of the difference between the respective societies and their cultures. The US educational system is, to a very substantial extent, one might even say first and foremost. instrumental, and always has been. What has changed over the years is the form, structure, and sophistication. The basic goals of preparing young people to earn a living, be good citizens and, perhaps to some degree, pursue happiness hardly have changed at all.

The goals of Israel's education system, on the other hand, in addition to those listed above, have included great concern for the transmission of Jewish civilization and heritage and the fostering of communal and group solidarity. The later are tasks that, in most cases today, are even forbidden to the American public school system as it has evolved, although they (or similar ones) once were important. True, there are differences in Israel as what constitutes the group, the heritage, and the civilization: e.g. between Jews and Arabs, between secular, religious, and ultra religious — but all are agreed on the vital necessity of pursuing both sets of goals each group its own way. All of these concerns need investigation in order to have reasonable impact on Israeli education. At the same time, an increasingly higher percentage of those in Israel's society in whatever group continue to seek a certain amount of unity as Israelis. Why this is so and how it expresses itself in the educational system is also a matter that needs continuing investigation.

These kinds of baseline studies may seem to others as "descriptive" and, indeed, they emphasize findings rather than policy recommendations. But without those findings there can be no useful policy recommendations and no studies that can propose any. Those findings are necessarily

complex because the different groups have different visions, all of which are expressed within the framework of the school system.

One of the most important aspects of Israel's school system in the last decade has been its ability to accommodate all or at least most of those differences and, by doing so, not only to allow different groups to pursue their own visions but to generate greater unity in the society as a whole, even at its peripheries among groups that once considered themselves outside of it. Much of what others might refer to as "politics" in Israel is the debate that surrounds the pursuit of these other "non instrumental" goals. Obviously since they have an ideological component, those issues must seem akin to politics, but they are not, at least not in the American sense of the term. This is not to say that more concrete instrumental questions are not important in the Israeli schools, even at times very important, only that Israel has another layer of problems and its instrumental problems are related to them and are of a different order.

The dimensions of this shift, from the perspective of the Israeli society, are titanic. Moreover, they are connected with another shift in Israel, from a perception of a necessity for conflict with the Palestinians and other Arabs to the pursuit of peace. It is connected with the movement from the simpler society of the past, resting upon Jewish and Zionist solidarity, to the more complex and more diverse society (diverse at least in definitions of what constitutes the pursuit of happiness) of today that makes Michael Jackson and Madonna more attractive to many of the young than the great poets of the Zionist renaissance or even the song writers of the last generation such as Naomi Shemer who wrote "Jerusalem of Gold". In order to understand education in Israel, one has to understand these forces since nothing can be done to deal with them unless their impact on the educational system is understood.

Pre-State Zionist Education: Means and Ends

The Zionist enterprise, from its very beginnings, relied upon the educational system it planned to and did develop, as a critical part of the revolution it sought to bring about. In this its

attitude reflected a continuation of traditional Jewish attitudes toward education, except that Zionist education saw Jewish transformation rather than simple continuity as the main goal of the Zionist enterprise. From the first, and continuing until the middle of the first generation after the establishment of the state sometime in the 1960s, teachers were considered among the most important pioneers. Teaching was considered to be a major Zionist mission and, as such, a sacred calling. The best and the brightest were attracted to the educational profession and had considerable status and pride because of their recognized mission.

That mission was not only a matter of conducting normal classroom activity but was expressed in headline-making conflicts and very broadly-based educational activities outside the classroom that affected whole generations. The major conflicts came over the revival of the Hebrew language as the working language of the Zionist enterprise and its Yishuv (settled community) in Eretz Israel. The major outside activities ranged from teacher-led class hikes throughout the land to service in the Hagana Zionist underground.

The first efforts to revive Hebrew came in the 1860s in Jerusalem a generation before the emergence of political Zionism and emerged out of traditional Jewish society in the country at the time, the so-called Old Yishuv, particularly its Sephardic segment. It became essentially a Zionist enterprise in the 1880s through the efforts of Eliezer Ben Yehuda who was hailed in Zionist mythology as the father of the modern Hebrew language. Through him the Zionist pioneers embraced Hebrew as their language, but the final and most critical struggle came before World War I in a great language conflict which tested the Yishuv.

Many Zionists (including, it seems, Theodore Herzel) assumed that Israel would adopt one of the modern European languages, German or French and preferably the former, as the common language of the Jews in Eretz Israel. The Zionist pioneers on the ground demanded that this status be reserved for Hebrew. The struggle took place primarily in the schools, the most important place where official decisions could be made by the Zionists themselves. In a very public, raucous, and at times even violent conflict, Hebrew won out and the Zionist educators who championed Hebrew strengthened their position as pioneering heroes of the Yishuv.

The schools that they built, anchored in the Hebrew language, were designed to reflect their particular versions of Zionist ideology. The Zionist movement from the first shared a common vision of rebuilding the Jewish national home in the Jews' historic Land of Israel and to rebuild it in a utopian manner, but the member groups of the movement had very different visions of what should be the content of their new Zionist utopia. Since most of the leaders of the movement on the ground came from Eastern Europe, it is not surprising that the socialist and revolutionary ideologies of Eastern Europe came to occupy a major place in the Zionist effort, with several variants of socialism, from revolutionary Marxism and emphasis on the class struggle to utopian Tolstoyan socialism based on a back to the land movement that was seen as releasing the better angels of human nature. All found their place in the struggle and, whatever their differences, together came to constitute a "camp" within the Zionist movement.

Religious Zionism also came to constitute a camp, consisting of a socialist wing that combined Jewish religious tradition, Zionism, pioneering, and religious socialism, and a more general wing that was social democratic. A third camp developed around the General Zionists, those who saw themselves primarily as European-style liberals with strong social and national inclinations. It was based on a relative few western-style liberals and a much larger base of small shopkeepers who sought government protection as much or more than markets.

Each of these camps or, in some cases, parties within the camps, established its own schools to raise up a new generation in its spirit. Those schools, known as "trends," were organized and maintained by the various camps and the parties supporting each, but within the common framework of the Zionist movement. After World War I the Jewish Community in Eretz Israel was formally restructured under the British and education came under the instrumentalities of the overall Yishuv, namely the Asefat HaNivharim (Elected Assembly), the Vaad Haleumi (National Council) of the Yishuv, and later the Jewish Agency. What characterized this educational system in all of its trends was that it had strong ideological thrusts derived in part from European sources and in part from Jewish ones. The schools of the labor camp shared a common educational progressivism, most extremely manifested in the kibbutz schools that were trying to produce a "new Zionist man." This was much less the case in the Religious schools

where traditional Jewish learning remained important. The schools of the Civil camp were relatively conventional following the European models that their educators knew. All of these schools fostered Hebrew, Bible, Zionist and Jewish commitment, each in its own way, and some combination of socialism or welfare democracy. Only the ultra-Orthodox remained outside of this system, having rejected Zionism as impious.

In short order Israel's educational system became the wonder of the Middle East and certainly among the foremost in the Jewish world. It was comprehensive and functioned on every level from pre-school through university and adult education. It had high standards, and working with a self-selected, highly intelligent population was successful in achieving those standards. It was goal-oriented and the entire system was staffed and led by high-status professionals.

Israeli Adaptations in the First Generation of Statehood

With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and its victory in the War of Independence, the new state faced two immediate challenges aside from simply establishing itself as a state. One was the absorption of huge masses of Jewish immigrants from around the world. Within a few years Israel's population tripled from some 660,000 Jews who were in the country on Independence Day in 1948 to nearly 2,000,000. These new immigrants had to be settled and absorbed, their physical and social needs had to be provided for, and they had to be integrated into existing Israeli society and with one another despite their widely divergent backgrounds.

In the spirit of the times that held that integration invariably involved the newcomers assimilating into the established order, efforts were made to turn them into "Israelis" along the pattern of the Israeli community that had developed in earlier days of Zionist pioneering: predominantly Ashkenazic Eastern European in orientation, socialist or social democratic in ideology, secular in spirit albeit with certain corners reserved for Jewish tradition, and highly politicized. Much of the task of achieving this was given to the educational system. Initially, it was the educational system, as it emerged from the days of the British Mandate with all the various

In fact, the big losers were the General Zionists, also the major opponents of the Mapai-led coalition in power, since they lost their trend entirely as it was consolidated with the Labor trend to form the State schools. For political reasons the Religious camp was able to preserve a great deal of its independence. The Religious Zionist trend was reorganized under state control as the State Religious schools and the ultra-Orthodox non-Zionist schools were left as Independent schools, recognized by the state and given some state support but otherwise not bothered with the necessity to conform to state standards, except at a very minimum level. Moreover, while the state schools were consolidated, kibbutz education was a kind of subsystem from the first and the kibbutzim retained great control over the education of their young, also for political reasons. In addition, a system of State Arabic schools was established to provide the Arabic speaking minority in Israel, principally Muslim but also including Druse and Christians, an opportunity to be educated in their own language, culture, and traditions even while they learned Hebrew and basic Israeli subjects.

Because defense and education were understood to be such important functions, Mapai kept its political control of them firmly if subtly in place, making certain that the top officers in command of the army were either Mapai members or acceptable to Mapai and that the Ministry of Education also remained dominated by Mapai although the semi-separate subsystems were given their own little fiefdoms within the Ministry from which to control "their" schools. (Contrast this with Ben-Gurion's attitude toward the social welfare system. He believed that state provision of public welfare benefits was a transient phenomenon that would exist only during the immigrant generation. Hence he made no move to nationalize welfare and social services, allowing them to remain in the hands of the local governments, where they had been, on the grounds that it was not worth the political fight necessary to bring them into the new statist system that he was erecting. Of course his assessment proved erroneous in the end, but only after he had left the scene.)

Since something like 95 percent or more of the Israeli population, Jewish and Arab, fit into the three categories whose educational facilities were absorbed by the state system either in its general or religious forms, the 1953 changes provided for what was in effect a single

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consolidated system with a minimum of institutionalized diversity based upon historical considerations. Together the kibbutzim and the ultra-Orthodox communities may have constituted five percent of the country's Jewish population, but even that with difficulty. Thus for most Israelis, a statewide curriculum and standards could be established and a structure set up to enforce them, while even the historic variations accommodated within the system were well within the parameters of the Zionist ideology. The school system came to be looked upon as a single one for all intents and purposes.

The main problem that confronted the system from this perspective was that of the integration of new immigrants and their children. This proved to be primarily a problem of integrating Jewish children from Asian and African countries into the predominantly European Ashkenazic models that were the accepted ones in the school system. It was most severe for those who lived on the state's peripheries outside of the central areas. In those "development" areas, urban and rural, the problem was compounded by a shortage of qualified teachers and by the misunderstandings that came as a result of unanticipated cultural gaps and the stereotypes that grew up around them.

Not surprisingly, then, the thrust of educational efforts and especially efforts at educational reform and research in the first generation focused overwhelmingly on issues of integration and educating disadvantaged children. Religious diversity within the Zionist camp was accepted and not problematic. The kibbutzim still occupied a special position as Israeli society's pioneering elite, hence they were entitled to have a somewhat special educational system. Arabs, Druse, and Haredim were too few in number and too outside of the society to make much of a difference.

All of this was further aided by the spatial separation of the different groups. The non-Jewish minorities lived primarily in their own regions of the country and in their own villages in those regions, so they could easily be accommodated by a separate school system. The kibbutzim were not only physically separate but were governmentally separate as well, with their own local authorities (kibbutzim and regional councils). Even the ultra-Orthodox who lived in the center

of the country, lived in their own neighborhoods that could function as small enclaves within the larger society.

Change in the 1970s and Its Generational Connection

Each system had no real problems maintaining itself through the Six-Day War and into the 1970s. True, the problem of integration was only partially resolved and substantial groups of children became young adults and then adults without being fully integrated into Israeli society by the formal educational system, but universal military service in the IDF and the development of an extensive educational program within the IDF that saw as one of its major missions integration of all those who served into a common Israeli society, was sufficient to overcome many of the "failures" of the school system. Moreover, since the same canons of integration did not apply to the non-Jewish minorities who in any case, except for the Druse, did not serve in the IDF, there was no particular minority problem of that kind to deal with.

Moreover, as time went on, the non-Jewish minorities reacted like many minority groups with sufficient intelligence to do so. Many among them became strivers within the educational system, seeking educational success as a means to individual advancement and self-improvement. Thus, for example, compared to the problem of apparently similar minorities in the United States who had permanent problems of low achievement for so many of their members, problems of low achievement, to the extent that they existed, were different within the Jewish community among those defined as educationally disadvantaged and with the non-Jewish minorities who spoke a different language, had to learn Hebrew in School, and came from a very different culture.

Still, as those who had come to the country during the years of mass immigration or their children settled in to become Israelis and as Israel passed through its initial period of statist consolidation, changes occurred in the educational system and new educational demands emerged. One of the first changes was a dramatic change in educational personnel. Now

routinized within a state, education ceased to be a major pioneering activity in the public mind or in the minds of those who entered the profession. For a while the pioneering spirit persisted among teachers who were native or long-time Israelis who went out to the development areas, but soon that, too, was in retreat and the educational profession in Israel came to resemble the profession in other countries. The proportion of women teachers greatly increased, first at the elementary levels and then in the secondary schools. As salaries improved in other sectors of the economy, men seeking to support themselves and their families were drawn elsewhere. Teaching became routinized and not so much a matter of transmitting ideals and idealism. A state educational bureaucracy emerged. The strong teachers unions dominated by what essentially were professional labor organizers. Once instruments of pioneering, now they saw their success not so much in educational achievements but in protecting and extending the rights and benefits of their members. What had once been a system dominated by then-progressive methods became more conservative as it became more formalized.

Moreover, the role of parents was drastically diminished as they lost the power that they had when the schools were in the hands of voluntary or semi-voluntary parties and movements. This tendency was exacerbated by the fact that the schools were agents of integration serving a population in which most parents were immigrants and did not know the culture into which their children not only were being integrated but sought to be integrated. In many cases, bewildered by the new society they encountered, the parents were forced to rely upon the schools, either happily, or if less so, out of necessity.

Not surprisingly, the first realistic and effective demands for change came from the more veteran and established families. In this they were aided and abetted by Jewish political culture which makes dissatisfaction with what exists (which inevitably is never perfect) normative and that encouraged complaints and efforts to make changes for improvement. The demands of these families often were traced back to problems stemming from the movement for integration, whereby parents saw their children as forced to be schooled with others from different cultural backgrounds, of lower socioeconomic status, and, in their eyes, less intellectual capacity. (For

example, if they did not have an appreciation of classical music, for many parents it was a sign that they were a bad influence on their children.)

As the Ministry of Education increased its integration efforts, it exacerbated this problem. It was topped off by the educational reform of the late 1960s that transformed the Israeli educational system from an 8-4 system to one based on 6-3-3 with the top two elementary grades and the lowest secondary grade transferred to middle schools whose catchment areas were designed to permit greater social integration of Europeans, Asians, and Africans, thereby forcing the issue. Formally, parental demands for change were couched in the form of educational demands for open or experimental schools (in the State school system) or for experimental schools or schools with enriched Torah study programs (in the State Religious school system). In fact, behind those demands often were efforts on the part of established Israeli parents, almost overwhelmingly from European backgrounds, to have their children learn in schools with fewer Asian and African students. Still, the formal demands had a certain legitimacy and the parents who made them a certain degree of political power, so the system began to move to accommodate them with a few selected open, experimental, and Torah-enriched schools in the early 1970s.

Other issues were beginning to surface as well. Children and parents began to complain that the matriculation examinations set too high a standard for average children, distorted the learning system, and put inordinate pressures on the children who had to take them. They were supported by a growing number of the leaders in the educational sphere, particularly in the universities, who were American-trained and brought back American ideas of a less rigorously academic education for most children, of the "teach the child, not the subject" kind.

The middle school "reform" was progressing slowly and was not proving to be all that successful where it had progressed. The Afro-Asian families, especially the new generation that came to age in Israel, were unhappy about the deprivation of political power that seemed to be the lot of their sectors of society. The ultra-Orthodox population had started to grow, primarily as the result of a large birthrate. The Six-Day War (1967) had brought the Palestinians into contact

with their Arab brethren from across the old "green line" (the de facto border with Jordan and Egypt) and they were being enticed into the development of a common Palestinian identity, if only by the circumstances. The Druse became more clearly aware of their separation from the Muslim Arabs while their younger generation, having become more identified with Israel through army service, began to seek a separate Israeli identity for all Israeli citizens, but less connected with their ethno-religious communities.

All of these phenomena were exacerbated by the Yom Kippur War (1973), which caused all Israelis to lose a certain amount of confidence in the Israeli establishment and the political-social system that it had erected during the first generation of statehood and before. Thus a major transition occurred between the Yom Kippur War in 1973 and 1977, when a Likud-led coalition headed by Menachem Begin won the Knesset elections and took political power away from the Mapai-led Labor camp for the first time. The changes began in the minds of the people and then spread to influence their behavior and the shape of the state. The idea that a Mapai-led coalition was inevitable fell as the Africans and Asians sought empowerment and enough Europeans sought governmental reform, thereby leading to Begin's 1977 victory. While much slower to have an impact, the idea began to spread that socialism was not the best way to develop an economy, and efforts to emancipate Israel from the socialist model acquired momentum.

The idea of greater social and cultural equality was slower to emerge, in most part because Israeli society always had been formally committed to social equality and prided itself on its achievements in that regard. The only question was whether it would embody cultural equality among the various groups or whether it would require them to assimilate into the dominant Israeli culture formed in pre-state days or its form as developed by those who grew up within it. (For example, Jews from the African and Asian countries were almost always portrayed stereotypically as objects of humor in Israeli films before the 1980s and their music was available only from cassettes made outside of the mainstream music markets in the country. It was not until after 1977 that the public presentation of the stereotypes began to break down and

the so-called "bourekas" (named after a Sephardic delicacy) films disappeared and the so-called "music of the cassettes" began to be picked up in mainstream musical life in the country.

The Haredim also emerged from the shadows. Their political party, Agudath Israel, did not at first join Begin's coalition, but they did support it in the Knesset and were rewarded accordingly. They claimed those rewards expressly for support of their educational institutions.

In sum, a new generation brought the empowerment of the several "other Israelis" that had been in the minority during the days of domination by the Labor camp — first the non-socialists; then the Sephardim; then, increasingly, the ultra-Orthodox haredim who, as they became stronger, also became more politically significant and found it to their advantage to enter the political process because they needed the benefits of government aid and position that it could provide, and finally the non-Jewish minorities, awakened and increasingly empowered by the rise of their sense of Palestinian-ness.

All of this was to have been expected in the change of political generations that occurred as a matter of course. The combination of biological and social development has given life everywhere, including political life, a generational rhythm. As the old generation passes from the scene and a new generation comes onto it, problems, expectations and agendas are changed accordingly and, sooner or later, power passes to those for whom the new expectations and agendas are central and who are prepared to confront the new problems. As all students of the generational rhythm of life have understood, a political generation lasts between 25 and 40 years or the average about 33, so it is not surprising that the new political generation born with the establishment of the state in 1948 was displaced in the 1970s and replaced by a new one after 1977. Needless to say, the educational system had to be affected by these changes and it was.

The Educational System Responds in the 1980s

The response to all of this produced major changes in Israeli society. In the first place there was a reaction on the part of the established classes to the new demands of the newly empowered or enfranchised other Israelis. Most of these seemed to surround the peace issue as the new Likud led non-socialist government redefined itself as the national camp and the Labor camp increasingly became the home of the more "dovish" elements in Israeli society. The Labor camp also became more secular in its orientation, forcing even those haredim who were not in agreement with the Likud on peace issues into the arms of the latter. By the same token, a growing Arab population increasingly abandoned their particular forms of rejection of full involvement in Israeli politics to join with the Labor camp in an effort to unseat a Likud-led government that they saw as unfriendly to their national aspirations.

Meanwhile the drive of Zionist ideology continued to diminish among the established classes as their new generation sought to become more a part of the world mainstream and Zionism began to be associated with the extension of Zionism through settlement of the administered territories and increased support for the representatives of Jewish religion, both ideas that were at best of dubious value for the vast majority of the established classes. In the 1980s all of this began to be played out in the educational system in new, unanticipated, and in many respects unrecognized ways that were only to be recognized in the 1990s, after the fact.

Of these, the ideological and goal changes probably came first. A majority of the more established Israelis in pursuit of their cosmopolitan dream wanted their children to become better at mathematics and English so that they could enter the larger world on better terms. They were less interested in Zionist and Jewish subjects.

Connected with this was the increasing number of parents who wanted more "say" in their children's education for one reason or another. Some, indeed, wanted to introduce more teaching about the Jewish tradition in the schools, contrary to the dominant trend, mainly because the dominant trend had led to the reduction of those civilizational as distinct from

instrumental dimensions of the curriculum. Other parents wanted to increase the amount of teaching of other dimensions — science and the arts, the intellectually gifted, education in the spirit of the Labor movement, increased study of traditional religious sources within an Orthodox framework, closer connections between the school and the community, and, among the Arabic language schools, separate schools and curricula for Druse and Circassian children (a small group of non-Arab Muslims brought from the Caucasus in what was then Russia to the Galilee in the nineteenth century who have preserved their ethnic separation from other Muslims), or Bedouin. In essence, the greater integration of previously marginal or excluded groups into Israeli society, led to a shift from acquiescence in a uniform curriculum for all to a search for desirable specialization according to parental and to some extent student interests.

During the 1980s, efforts were made to meet virtually all of these demands. Why did a system previously perceived to be highly centralized, even autocratic at times, accommodate such radical diffusion so readily? No doubt because of the convergence of circumstances.

In the first place, it proved to be possible without significant change in the law. The 1953 law already provided that principals could modify up to 25 percent of the curriculum in their schools within Ministry of Education-approved parameters. This was probably a concession to those who were concerned about the elimination of the more valuable aspects of the trends, whatever different groups considered them to be.

Later, in the 1960s, the law was further amended to provide that parents could alter twenty percent of the curriculum with the agreement of the principal and the Ministry. Although this was minimally tested with the first experiments in diversity, in the 1980s it became the basis for the far-reaching diffusion that took place. (No one has yet tested whether the parents' share and the principals' share are intended to be consecutive or convergent, probably because changing 20 to 25 percent of an elementary or secondary school curriculum is about all that anyone would need to do in order to bring about whatever was desired in a school, considering that there is a general agreement on teaching certain basics that occupy most of the curriculum, and that many things are simply done informally and do not require formal steps, for example, the choice

of emphasis in teaching the same subjects, as illustrated in *Trends in the Israel Education Budget in the 1980's* by Dr. Shimon Rosevitz.)

In addition, Israel entered into a serious economic crisis at the beginning of the 1980s. Inflation was running wild and budgets were necessarily being cut. In educational terms this meant that the number of classroom hours funded by the Ministry of Education was reduced every year to reach what seemed to be an absolute possible minimum of four hours a day, six days a week. Since the Ministry was the only regular source of funds, it had to find ways to attract new sources within the limits of a system that did not empower any such new sources to become regular participants.

The Ministry did this by tacitly acquiescing to what came to be called "grey education" — that is to say parent-funded supplements to the regular school program. Most of the funding went to the schools themselves, in essence further making the parents partners in the formal education of their children. Grey education raised new problems of equity and ability to pay, but in the meantime gave parents much more choice in what the children would learn by virtue of the fact that they determined what supplements they were willing to sponsor and pay for.

On top of all this there was the general spread of the idea that decentralization was important for strengthening the educational system, an idea that began to take hold in at least some quarters in Israel as well as elsewhere. It was coupled with at least some educational research that suggested that the goal of increasing integration which dominated educational concerns in the previous generation was better advanced in special focus schools than in general schools. Special focus schools attracted parents and students who had the appropriate common interests thereby strengthening acceptance of the fusion then taking place. By the end of the decade there were some thirty varieties of schools in the Israeli school system, all government funded. There also was increased funding for the Independent school system as a result of agreements among the parties in the process of coalition formation.

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Meanwhile the content of education also was changing as was demonstrated in Jo-Ann Harrison's study, *Unity and Diversity of Culture and Curriculum in the Israeli Education System*. The shift continued to be away from the subjects preferred when the Zionist movement was in its heyday, those that emphasized Zionism, the Jewish heritage, especially Bible, Hebrew language and literature; and, for that matter, classics of literature in the English language, to such baldly instrumental subjects as mathematics, and modern and spoken English, including content changes that involved teaching less Shakespeare and more contemporary materials. The system of matriculation examinations, while preserved, was revised to reduce pressures on the students and to allow the individual schools and teachers to have a greater input on the testing process through the introduction of in-school backup exams that could be included in the final results of the state-wide tests.

The Situation in the Early 1990s

All of these changes taken together essentially established a new Israeli educational profile. Both the changes and the results are described in the four baseline reports of ISES collectively the first systematic look at the Israeli educational system in light of those changes. It is clear that the educational system has made major shifts from ideological to instrumental goals; from the effort to transmit a heritage while at the same time revolutionizing it, to an effort to produce functioning adults capable of pursuing their private goals of making a living and pursuing happiness, presumably in a way that will be beneficial to Israel as a whole and will not interfere with their civic responsibilities, that are still encouraged. Civilizational goals are not rejected, just reduced in importance; while the private goals emphasized are more related to productive participation in the work force than individual pursuit of happiness, although the latter are growing in importance.

It is equally clear that this is a sea change in Israel's educational system. It is a sea change that is also manifested in increased reliance on parents for funding education that, while still modest, is far more than anything heretofore and which raises serious questions of the consequences of

differential parental abilities to do so on the equity of the system and the solidarity which had marked it in the past. It is also clear that these greater demands on parents require tradeoffs, namely giving parents more choice in the education of their children.

These two changes also significantly reduced the solidarity features of the old system. The system's present thrust is toward promoting individual goals rather than group solidarity whether as Jews (or Muslims or Druse for that matter) or as Israelis. Indeed, it is striking to note that Jews, by comprising four-fifths of Israel's citizens, have been abandoning these solidarity goals, at least throughout the past decade, while the Druse, an ethnic-religious minority but one that has cast its lot with Israel, are at the forefront of seeking to foster a new solidarity as Israelis for their young people and, implicitly, for all others. -

If new equity questions have arisen in the majority Jewish sector, new efforts have been made to increase equity between the Jewish and minority sectors, with Arabic education, Muslim or Druse, getting substantial increases in financial support even during a period of general budgetary austerity, to reduce the gap between Arabic and Hebrew education. The reasons for this can be understood in line with the general trends. Hence as the Jewishness of the Jewish state becomes less important and its Israeliness becomes more important, that Israeliness is perceived as needing to be extended to all Israelis equally. This, in turn, requires remedial action among the non-Jewish minorities. The problem with this is that the Jewish and Muslim communities are at different stages in their attitudes. Thus the majority of Israeli Jews seem to have passed through their most nationalist phase and are now moving into a more cosmopolitan - cum- individualist one, while Israeli Arabs have ceased being a traditional society in the old sense and have now entered into a Palestinian nationalist phase. Thus the Israeli educational leadership is faced with a dilemma. Justice and equity require equalization, but the extra money for that purpose often is used by the Arabs to promote Palestinian identity and, in some cases, nationalism, which may well work to the detriment of Israel.

On the other hand, equity is only simple justice for the Druse whose interest actually may be very much in line with the direction in which a majority of the Israeli Jews is moving. This

may prove contrary to the intentions of the founders of Israel to move in that direction. They saw Israel as a Jewish state, pure and simple, even if it had non-Jewish minorities within it. Today some Israelis are proposing to view Israel as an Israeli state whose Jewish majority is comfortable but is no more than a majority. The question remains as to whether the decrease in Jewish solidarity that the new educational system reflects and supports and the increase in individualistic goals does not pose its own internal problems for the Jewish majority in Israel.

At the same time, the change also has allowed parents to assert their own interests in modifying the overall thrust of the school. For example, the Tali schools (a Hebrew acronym for increased Jewish studies), constitute an important example for those non-Orthodox parents who want their children to have more knowledge of their traditional Jewish heritage. Those schools have offered them the opportunity to achieve that. It is widely recognized in Israel that the growth of such a sub-system within the state schools is a significant phenomenon and has given rise to emulators among parents who have other substantive goals. At the same time, Tali's critics have charged that the existence of such schools makes it possible for families from the upper socio-economic levels to avoid integration of their children with those from the lower socio-economic levels which, as we have seen, is a major issue in Israeli society and continues to be. That possibility is worthy of investigation.

Other changes also can be noted. For example, the ISES study has revealed that not only were the education budgets reduced in the 1980s, but within the reduced budgets more money was shifted by the local authorities from formal to informal education. Israel has a long tradition of governmental subsidization of culture and sports, unlike, for example, the United States which treats those subjects as belonging to the private and non-governmental sectors except in certain cases where they are assisted in the most marginal ways or very indirectly. This means that almost all cultural, artistic and sports activities not only receive subsidies but receive the major portions of their budgets, if not their total budgets from governmental sources and are dependent upon those sources to survive. Indeed, when a new cultural, artistic or sports group comes into existence, almost the first thing it does is to seek a major governmental subsidy. So the Israeli government, state or local, not only subsidizes soccer and basketball teams but also the chess

and volleyball clubs. Israelis look upon those subsidies as matters of right and entitlement. The budget for those subsidies has been part of the overall education budget provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture.[1]

The shift of the past decade was not simply to informal education but, it seems, primarily to sports. Thus sports subsidies grew at the expense of formal schooling, as local authorities found that they had the freedom to divert funds and use them to enable their elected officials to gain political support among their constituents. This, too, deserves further study.

What Next?

The victory of the Labor coalition in Israel's 1992 Knesset elections brought some budgetary improvement for Israeli schools and substantial personnel changes at the upper levels of the Ministry of Education, but otherwise has, to date, continued the trends of the previous decade, in some cases — for example, in extending the length of the school day on a selected basis — intensifying them.School diversity seems likely to continue, yet ways and means will have to be developed to best utilize it and at the same time to smooth off its roughest edges, including problems of equity. There is further discussion of privatization not only in the air but on paper, with proposals being floated for more movement in that direction and being attacked by those who feel that the private dimension must remain within a public context. This is very likely to be a major battlefield of the 1990s.

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[1] For internal political reasons, the Rabin government separated culture from the Ministry of Education in 1993 to give Shulamit Aloni, a leader of its major coalition partner, Meretz, a portfolio, thus for the first time separating the two budgets. This may be a transient phenomenon or it may become permanent as politicians find it useful to have the extra ministry.

Coupled with privatization is a new interest in more local (as distinct from school) autonomy. Every municipal government in Israel has its own education department responsible to the local mayor and council. That department has been seen principally as a local arm of the Ministry of Education for certain purposes, such as selection of school principals and the construction and maintenance of school buildings. In the last decade, as individual schools gained more autonomy, questions were raised as to whether or not these local education departments and the municipalities they serve should not be given more educational autonomy to oversee the individual schools. Questions have been raised as to what would they do that would not interfere with school autonomy but would add to it. Are they ready for such autonomy? What does it mean to be ready? Would local autonomy of this kind come at the expense of parental choice or be a means to decentralize a once highly centralized ministry? These are all questions that will be on the agenda in the 1990s.

Another issue that arose in the 1980s undoubtedly will be the subject of considerable activity, although it is unlikely to be as openly discussed as the previous ones. That is the question of the role of previously peripheral groups in Israeli society and their relationship to the educational system. The educational system has a major role to play here and, as we have seen, has been playing it.

One aspect will be, of course, the further integration of the Israeli Arabs and Druse, two very different groups, each with its own set of issues and problems. Studies show that the Druse are what might be called "super Israelis." That is to say, they seek an even stronger Israeli dimension for their identity than do most Jews. They will have to be given more of the opportunities for living equally within Israeli society that they seek and to which they have won the right through their loyalty toward Israel, as manifested in their participation in military service since the 1940s. As a permanent minority throughout the Middle East, the Druse in each country have made efforts to be integrated into their respective countries of citizenship. Where they have been successful, they have been excellent citizens. Where such integration has not been successful, as in Lebanon in the 1970s, the Druse have served as catalysts for all kinds of disaffection, not excluding bloody civil war.

Prudence and equity both demand a similar effort with regard to Israel's Arabs and efforts have been made to equalize the resources available to them especially in the fields of local government and education. Whether they will continue and succeed is an open question. It may be too little and/or too late. Our studies offer clear indications that Palestinian identity and nationalism not only are growing but are being fostered by the Arab educators in one way or another. This has very important implications for the future of Israel.

The studies also have shown that major developments have taken place with regard to the integration of the ultra-Orthodox into Israeli society, assisted by the educational system. While public attention has been focused on *haredim* as a disturbing, even anti-Israeli element growing in strength within Israel's Jewish community, the truth is far more complex than that and may indeed be something else in the longer term. The sudden visibility of the *haredim* is not so much as a result of an increase in their number, although those numbers have increased, but because they have emerged from isolation to become more a part of Israeli society, even if a disturbing part in some cases and for some people. Their growth in numbers has led them to become more integrated into the state because of their need for the same or similar kinds of governmental support that other sectors of Israeli society receive as a matter of course through Israel's political and governmental processes.

While the *haredim* have sought protected and to some extent subsidized isolation throughout the first generation of Israel's statehood, since the beginning of the second they have been willing to accept a degree of greater integration in return for greater support which is manifested in many different ways in Israeli society. Here we are considering only the educational system. The *haredim* became supporters of the Begin government and essentially part of the Begin coalition because of these needs and in return they received the rewards they sought and the opportunities to secure those rewards through the positions in politics that they needed. Thus the independent schools began to receive greater funding. *Haredi yeshivot* were placed on what they considered to be a position closer to par with the universities. (Many non-*haredim* believe

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that they have exceeded par.) Some of the *haredim* even have moved towards more acceptance of national service.

Most important, as part of the Sephardic empowerment, a Sephardic *haredi* party, Shas — the Sephardic Torah Guardians — emerged and became powerful. Blessed with good leadership, an attractive purpose, at least at first glance, and good programs, Shas rapidly made headway in the Israeli political system and transferred that headway into substantial gains since the programs they developed for their constituents or for those they wanted to attract were primarily educational programs. The educational system has been one of their principal arenas of operation and the establishment of their educational framework, "El HaMaayan," was a first step toward securing funding for what were, at first, supplementary programs in the development towns and Sephardic neighborhoods of the bigger cities, but as they progressed they began to make inroads in the formal school system as well. The Israeli establishment still does not realize how far they have come, even though the budgets show their great increase in power.

All told, the *haredim* have severely weakened the Religious Zionist camp, particularly in the educational sphere. Since they had many young people who needed to support themselves and were willing to do so for less money than other Israelis, the *haredim* became a major source of teachers for the state religious schools. As teachers, they influenced the religious direction of their students. As many young Religious Zionists moved toward ultra-Orthodoxy religiously, they were also moving to adopt more nationalist positions in politics. This contributed to the establishment of sub-systems within the state religious school system that would give expression to these new more extreme positions.

Now, for the first time, there may be emerging a necessary counterpoint at least against *haredi* anti-Zionism, in the form of the graduates of the *hesder yeshivot*. These academies for higher Torah learning were established in connection with the IDF after 1967 to allow and encourage graduates of the state religious high schools who wanted to continue their religious studies, to do so within the context of their army service and not in place of it. *Hesder yeshivot* have been

a substantial success and indeed they have become among the major producers of officers for the Israeli army because they attract bright young men with strong patriotic feelings who are both capable of and willing to take responsibility within the Israeli military. Once they have finished their service many of these younger men are being attracted to teach in the state religious schools where they offer an alternative source of recruitment, one much more in the original spirit of those schools than the *haredim*. This may not attract much public attention but will be a major issue within the school system in the 1990s.

All told there will be continued tradeoffs between the larger Israeli society and the *haredim* as the *haredim* need more from the Israeli government and, perforce, will have to integrate more into Israeli society. They do so very selectively, keeping as much as possible to themselves, but they are doing so and that is very significant.

Secondary and Tertiary Education

While Zionist public institutions as a whole in the pre-state period were willing to take responsibility for elementary education, which they viewed as compulsory, secondary education was viewed by them as a matter of parental choice, not as part of the foundations of the society. So secondary schools developed as private institutions, paid for through tuition and perhaps some movement subsidies. It was not until after the Six-Day War that they were fully integrated into the state educational system and education was made compulsory through tenth grade. It was not until after the Begin government took power in 1977 that free compulsory high school education was made part of Israel's educational package.

If this was the case with high schools, how much more so was it the case with universities. Indeed they began essentially as graduate and professional institutions and only became BA granting much later. It was not until the 1980s that university education began to attract the

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attention of large numbers of Israelis as a necessity for economic and social advancement. Only in the 1990s is a beginning being made to recognize this new perception and to move the universities from elitist institutions serving limited populations to mass institutions serving the entire country.

Given the predilection of Jews the world over for higher education, it is not surprising the same is true among the Jews of Israel. Because Israel is a developing country, it has taken Jews here longer to reach the point where they could consider university education as part of their package of entitlements or that Israel's establishment began to recognize the benefits of higher education for economic growth. We now have reached that stage and are trying to come to grips with it.

One way is through the expansion of the number of institutions available for tertiary education. As indicated above, tertiary education began at the university level with graduate or professional education. The only equivalent of colleges were the normal schools which actually began as high schools early in the twentieth century then became post-high school institutions but still were not allowed to grant college degrees. In the 1980s those normal schools slowly were converted into B.A. granting institutions.

In the 1990s there is a general trend to increase the number of degree granting institutions of higher education from the handful (five general universities, two specialized university-like institutions) of the earlier days. The power to grant degrees has been conferred not only on the normal schools but on various smaller professional colleges and most recently on a whole group

of regional colleges, formerly branches of the five universities — in other words, to recognize the drive for mass college education.[2]

As this expansion takes place, the higher education system becomes more a part of the overall educational system of Israel and will have to be treated as such in research as well as in practice.

Vocational-Technical Education

By general agreement vocational-technical education, in Israel as in many other countries, has failed to achieve its intended purposes, although it continues to exist with large numbers of pupils. To say that, however, is not to say that it has failed in all respects. It must be understood not only in terms of its manifest purposes but also in its latent and unanticipated ones.

Vocational education is particularly a product of industrializing societies, whether they are industrializing in agriculture or in urban-based industries, whenever they require more skills than simple manual labor or what can be acquired by people of average intelligence on the job. At that point in human development it can be both effective and successful. It loses its effectiveness and hence its success as that phase of modernization is completed and economies shift from

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[2] An earlier attempt to do this in the years immediately following the Six-Day War was generated primarily by the post-war euphoria and the economic expansion it produced including the ability to raise funds from Jews abroad. However it was primarily for reasons of local prestige as each city, medium-sized or larger, sought to have its own university. Government policy was against this rapid expansion and the government was able to nip it in the bud because of its fiscal powers. This led to the organization and strengthening of the Council for Higher Education, the vehicle through which the government controls universities and other degree-granting institutions in Israel.

agriculture and basic industries to more advanced technologies requiring more sophisticated preparation and a higher intelligence level to succeed.

The vocational education systems that we have today are all products of that early industrializing period and most, if not all, have become obsolete after the opening of the metropolitan technological frontier, and the shift to more technologically-based economies. Now that we have moved onto a cybernetic frontier new kinds of vocational education that are essentially computer-related have come into the picture, probably for a relatively short time, while more sophisticated kinds of professional education are needed for the new service economies of the world.

It is accepted in Israel that Zionist pioneering began with vocational education, namely the founding of the Mikveh Israel agricultural school by French Jewry in 1870. From then until World War I, vocational education in agriculture was the only systematic vocational education in the country. The establishment of the Technion in Haifa in 1912 marked the beginning of vocational education for an urban industrializing society but it was really not until the 1920s that a few other such vocational institutions appeared. At the same time agricultural vocational education was still expanding. Yitzhak Rabin, for example, is a graduate of the Kadouri agricultural school which when he attended it was probably no more than a high school like all the others. That was the sum total of his post-elementary education until he reached the army, as it was for so many other of Israel's first generation of indigenous leaders.

After the establishment of the State of Israel a systematic network of vocational educational institutions was established with the manifest purpose of helping absorb the mass immigration and their children by giving them skills for useful employment, skills needed for Israeli society as a whole. The way this new system was implemented, however, may have done more to fulfill its latent than its manifest purposes, that is to say, to separate the African and Asian children from their higher SES counterparts among the Israeli-born and European immigrants. The latter were the predominant presence in the academic high schools where they were prepared for the matriculation exams while the former remained in vocational high schools that

did not even prepare their students for the matriculation exams, assuming from the beginning that those examinations were beyond them.

This situation persisted well into the second generation of Israeli statehood, although at the end of the first generation and the beginning of the second, an effort was initiated to increase the number of comprehensive schools that offered both academic and vocational education so that students would get some vocational training and also have a chance to prepare for their matriculation examinations. Meanwhile, of course, vocational education in Israel began to experience the same problems and frustrations as elsewhere, namely that the schools could not keep pace with the changing needs of a changing marketplace and that new needs for job training could not be incorporated quickly enough into the educational system to make a proper match between the two.

The vocational education system also had some unanticipated consequences. It introduced a population not previously familiar with formal schooling on the Western model to secondary education. Many of the vocational schools were sponsored by Zionist groups, particularly women's groups, from the diaspora and were given more tender loving care and acquired a more concerned set of backers than those vocational schools without those advantages, thus the schools often had the best of equipment to train the students.

Common to both those schools assisted by diaspora Jewry and those entirely within the state or state religious system, was the problem of a large cultural gap. The schools' governors — the supporters, supervisors, principals and teachers — basically were Ashkenazim while the student body was overwhelmingly Sephardi. Thus as a result the schools, even when they tried to foster such more academic concerns as study of the Jewish heritage, not to speak of overt religious behavior, did so by rejecting Sephardic cultural and religious traditions out of hand, either as a result of ignorance or contempt. In many respects the vocational schools became in an unanticipated way the incubators for a new generation of Israeli-born Sephardim who led the assault against Labor dominance in politics in the 1970s.

It was only after the Likud took power that some efforts were made to introduce Sephardic religious and cultural expressions into the schools. Meanwhile the schools were becoming progressively more obsolete and their function was becoming increasingly custodial. Moreover, many of the next generation of potential students were moving off into comprehensive or academic schools. That is where the situation stands today.

Conclusion

Overall, the issue of Israeli and Jewish group solidarity versus individualism is becoming more intense all the time. While we have emphasized the educational system's movement towards giving individualism more expression in the schools, we should not ignore the high percentage of Israelis who remain strongly devoted to group solidarity in one form or another. Until now, tensions between the two positions have been minimal, in part because the thrust toward education for individual expression has rather crept up on Israeli society. However, in the 1990s it has become very visible, with great increases in Israeli youths' involvement in Western pop culture, including its seamier sides, and what, for Israel, has been a great increase in juvenile deviance, all headline producing stuff. If Israeli Arab peace should come and the sense of Israel being in a state of siege declines these internal tensions are likely to be exacerbated. There is likely to be a new confrontational politics between advocates of group solidarity and advocates of contemporary style individualism that undoubtedly will find a primary arena in the educational system.

The ISES studies have revealed all of these issues, problems, and tensions and how they have unfolded in the school system in the last ten to fifteen years. They have also identified the points that need to be studied further or for which policy recommendations must be developed. Because of the cleavages that the ISES studies also reveal, we have come to the conclusion that in many areas the recommendations are so dependent upon prior assumptions that few common recommendations can be prepared. What can be suggested are "if-then" recommendations, i.e., if one assumes x, then one should pursue the following policies and if one assumes y, then one

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should follow very different ones. In some areas, of course, common policies not only should but must be pursued. For them we hope that a common set of policy recommendations will emerge from our work.

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